

sanctions on Iran, in 2012 it opposed U.S. efforts to tighten those sanctions.”

China has also been bolstering its presence in its own neighborhood. Since the 1990s, the PLA’s growing fleet of diesel submarines has worried Pentagon planners. The Chinese military is also developing antiship missiles that could make it dangerous for U.S. Navy vessels to venture too close to Chinese waters.

The United States nonetheless retains a military edge, especially on the open seas. In the long run, though, America will struggle to keep pace with Chinese spending in Asia. The Pentagon may need to jettison expensive weapons such as aircraft carriers in favor of “more capable and cost-effective platforms” such as remotely piloted aircraft and unmanned underwater vehicles.

A maritime-based American presence employing such military tools could counter China at an affordable price, Ross argues. On the other hand, he says, the Obama pivot will aggravate Sino-American relations and could lead to a fall. “Whereas post-Cold War U.S. administrations refrained from asserting U.S. power on mainland East Asia, the Obama administration has reversed course,” Ross writes. “The United States lacks the capabilities to sustain this effort.” ■

NATIONAL SECURITY 101

THE SOURCE: “Educating for National Security” by Jakub Grygiel, in *Orbis*, Spring 2013.

TODAY’S NATIONAL SECURITY RESEARCHERS leave little to chance. When danger is at hand, consult the formula for the probability of war. If events don’t proceed as predicted, rewrite the formula.

Many graduates of degree programs in national security and international relations take their lab coats with them into government, where they discover that advanced statistics and theories cannot account for the vagaries of international affairs. “The world is not a clock,” writes Jakub Grygiel, a professor at Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies, “and a scientific approach may not be the best way to study it nor to educate the next national security wardens.”

Grygiel offers an old-school alternative: a broad-based liberal arts education in “the tragic beauty of worldly affairs,” in which contingencies, imponderables, and surprises reign supreme. “To defend a country is an art,” Grygiel writes in *Orbis*. “The challenge is that we can train scientists but we cannot teach students to be artists. We can only educate them to appreciate art.”

That means reading the masters—Augustine, Machiavelli, Herodotus, Thucydides. All highlighted the puzzles of war and peace long before any political scientist tried to capture them in equations and esoteric theories.

But political scientists specializing in international relations and national security studies go on filling students' brains with abstruse mumbo jumbo. Academics prefer waging battles over methodological form to debating questions of substance. The threat posed by Al Qaeda, as well as the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, snapped some scholars out of their stupor. For the most part, though, there are few real disagreements in academia—the hot issues are all about methodology.

“The goal is to defend the United States.”

Overt patriotism is increasingly frowned upon in the ivory tower. Cadres of students and scholars fancy themselves “global citizens.” They set their sights on abstract nouns: global warming, poverty, and drugs. Those are valid concerns, but they shouldn't displace consideration of U.S. interests and ideals. “We are telling a generation of students that the world

is threatened by potentially rising seas (a ‘global’ threat) while Chinese strategists think about how to expel the United States out of the South China Sea.”

Universities trot out feel-good global institutes to groom cosmopolitan sensibilities. New York University's Center for Global Affairs vows to train “global citizens capable of identifying and implementing solutions to pressing global challenges.” Meanwhile, many U.S. colleges blanch at the thought of training military officers on campus in ROTC programs.

The global approach seeks to replace rooted allegiances with meaningless ties. “We are expected to feel an equal connection to our neighbors and to anonymous individuals with whom we share only the fact of living on the same planet,” Grygiel writes. “As the particular ends up being replaced by an abstraction, we lose our connection to the ‘here and now,’ to our families, neighbors, and friends.”

Grygiel wants to bring international relations and national security studies back down to earth. “The goal is to defend the United States, a concrete reality defined by history, tradition, and ideals.” Professors should populate their syllabuses with American classics—from the writings of the Founding Fathers

to the works of Reinhold Niebuhr and Thomas Schelling. Those and other works spur students to ponder “the key grand strategic questions of who we are and where we ought to go.”

There is plenty of room for students and scholars to disagree on these questions. Is the United States still an exceptional superpower or on the wane? But debates “are possible only in the presence of a common language—exactly the opposite situation of the one that characterizes modern academia.” ■

THE POWER OF K

THE SOURCE: “The Cognitive Revolution and the Political Psychology of Elite Decision Making” by Emilie M. Hafner-Burton, D. Alex Hughes, and David G. Victor, in *Perspectives on Politics*, June 2013.

FOR DECADES, PSYCHOLOGISTS AND ECONOMISTS have been piling up evidence that people are alarmingly irrational in their decision making. Many of us make bad choices about crucial matters such as investing our retirement savings. One documented reason: The pain of losses is greater than the pleasure of gains. When faced with an unusual situation, we tend to fall back on simple precedents, often choosing those that don’t apply or fumbling to identify any relevant experience at all. And few of us are able to see very far ahead when considering the

consequences of our decisions. It gets pretty scary when you ask how all of this applies to the people who manage America’s national security and other high-level tasks.

Calm down, say political scientists Emilie M. Hafner-Burton, D. Alex Hughes, and David G. Victor, writing in *Perspectives on Politics*. Most of the studies behind the “cognitive revolution” in our understanding of human rationality relied on willing undergraduates as their subjects. A smaller number of experiments involving CEOs, politicians, doctors, and other people in positions of great responsibility present a more complicated picture. Experienced elites, including leaders who decide the fate of nations, may be better able to avoid the cognitive errors that plague everyone else. However, they also have characteristic flaws of their own.

Humans rely on mental models to navigate complex events and make snap decisions. In new and fast-changing situations, most of us grope for one of these models, known to psychologists as heuristics. It’s different for elites with “domain-specific” experience. These Jedi Masters settle on appropriate heuristics much faster than most people. Veteran physicians, one study found, swiftly